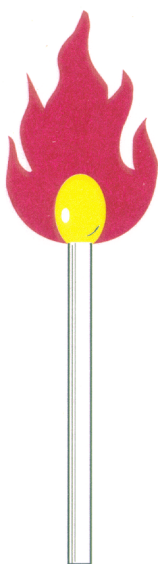


JUVENILE FIRESETTERS



**WHAT
YOU
CAN
DO!**

**NATIONAL ARSON PREVENTION INITIATIVE
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

Juvenile Firesetters

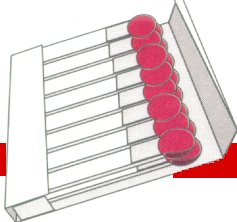
In Rochester, New York, a two year old, playing with matches, started a fire that took his life and the lives of five family members.

In Roanoke, Virginia, a seven year old boy set fire to a chair in an abandoned building, the fire spread to an adjacent house and trapped an elderly woman.

In Passaic, New Jersey, a firefighter was killed and hundreds of people lost their homes in a fire started by a group of teenage boys.

These tragic events are not isolated incidents. In a typical year, in the U.S., 300 people are killed and \$190 million in property is destroyed in fires set by children. Children themselves are usually the victims of these fires accounting for 85 of every 100 lives lost.

The number of fires set by children is growing. It is a problem that needs the attention of parents, teachers, counselors and community leaders, in cooperation with fire and law enforcement officers.



Why Children Set Fires

Most experts agree that the best way to understand firesetting behavior is to look at where and why children set fires. They believe that there are two basic types of children who start fires.

CURIOSITY FIRESETTERS usually are 2-7 year olds whose fascination with fire leads them to “play” with it to find out how it feels, how it burns, and what it does. They do not understand fire’s destructive potential.

Although curiosity is a normal part of children’s growth and development, parents and other adults who discover that a child is playing with fire should take it very seriously.

PROBLEM FIRESETTERS can also be very young, but generally are 5-17 years old. In contrast to the curious firesetter, however, these youngsters light fires because of emotional or mental disturbances ranging from mild to severe. A crisis in the child’s life, such as moving to a new area, a divorce or death could trigger firesetting behavior. Or, a more serious disturbance could be the cause. Chronic behaviors such as a poor relationship with other children, cruelty to animals, and extreme mood changes are a few of the traits that data on juvenile firesetters has revealed.

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

PARENTS . . .

Teach Your Child About Fire

- *Fire is a tool we use to heat our homes or cook our food.*
- *It is not a toy.*
- *Fire is dangerous -- it can kill.*
- *All fires -- even small ones -- can spread quickly.*
- *Even adults must follow special safety rules for fire.*

Control Your Child's Access to Fire

- *Keep all matches and lighters out of the reach of children -- even a 2 year old can operate a cigarette lighter.*
- *Never allow anyone to use lighters or matches in an unsafe manner in your home.*
- *Never leave stove or candle fires unattended*
- *Teach children to show you any unattended matches or lighters they find to your attention.*

Parents . . .

Set a Good Example

- *Install and maintain smoke detectors and five extinguishers.*
- *Plan and practice home fire escape drills.*
- *Regularly inspect your home for fire hazards.*
- *Always use “safety sense” when making or using fire.*
- *Point out to your children the safety rules you and others are following throughout the day.*

Teachers, Counselors, & Community Leaders . . .

Take Responsibility for Fire Safety

- *Teach fire safety in pre-school through high-school programs.*
- *Participate in training to learn about juvenile firesetters.*
- *Help to raise awareness in your community about juvenile firesetters.*
- *Know the resources in your community to help juvenile firesetters -- or help develop a juvenile firesetters program.*

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP!

Your Local Fire Dept.

Your State Fire Services

**National Arson Prevention
Clearing House
1-888-603-3100**

National Arson Prevention Clearinghouse
Suite E001, 16825 South Seton Avenue
Emmitsburg, Maryland 21727
1-888-603-3100